

# Proposal Reviews

## #2: Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

American Farmland Trust

**Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review**

**Delta Regional Review**

**External Scientific Review**

#1

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#4

**Environmental Compliance**

**Budget**

## Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review:

### CALFED Bay-Delta 2002 ERP PSP Research and Restoration Technical Panel Review Form

**Proposal Number:** 2

**Applicant Organization:** American Farmland Trust

**Proposal Title:** Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

**Review:**

**Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:**

**Superior:** outstanding in all respects;

**Above Average:** Quality proposal, medium or high regional value, and no significant administrative concerns;

**Adequate:** No serious deficiencies, no significant regional impediments, and no significant administrative concerns;

**Not Recommended:** Serious deficiencies, significant regional impediments or significant administrative concerns.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Superior	The aim of the project, ensuring economic viability of Valley agriculture, is outside of CALFED purview and capacity. The approach is not well documented, and the proposal is low on quantifiable results and weak on outcomes and products.
-Above average	
-Adequate	
XNot recommended	

1. **Goals and Justification.** Does the proposal present a clear statement of goals, objectives and hypotheses? Does the proposal present a clear justification and conceptual model for the project?

**Overall goals are clear, but justification is weak and it is questionable whether CALFED can impact economic viability of agriculture in the region, and whether that is within CALFEDs purview. Prioritization of Delta Region land uses would probably be useful.**

2. **Likelihood of Success (Approach, Feasibility, Capabilities and Performance Measures).** Is the project likely to succeed based on the approach, feasibility and project team capabilities? Are the proposed performance measures adequate for measuring the project's success?

**The approach is not well documented, nor are performance measures, nor anticipated outcomes. Capabilities of P.I.s look reasonable, and past performance has been excellent, but the aim of the proposal is to hire outside consultants. Why should CALFED not cut out the middleman?**

3. **Outcomes and Products.** Will the project advance the state of scientific knowledge in general and/or make an important contribution to the state of knowledge of the Bay-Delta Watershed? For restoration proposals, is the project likely to contribute to ecosystem restoration or species recoveries in a significant way? Will the project produce products useful to decision-makers and scientists?

**The proposal is weak on measurable outcomes and products.**

4. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

**The \$300,000.00 budget is excessive given the preliminary nature of this work. Start with a literature review, then invest about \$50,000/year to get some background on the issue.**

5. **Regional Review.** How did the regional panel(s) rank the proposal (High, Medium, Low)? Did the regional panel(s) identify significant benefits (regional priorities, linkages with other activities, local involvement) or impediments (local constraints, conflicts with other activities, lack of local involvement) to this proposal? What were they?

**Delta: Low ranking. This project would be more timely if it occurred after completion of the collaborative planning efforts now being developed in the Delta. In the interim, AFT should work directly with others that are planning in the Delta to avoid counter-productive efforts to preserve future farm use of areas planned for ecosystem restoration. Planning for east side tributary watersheds as well as legal Delta is appropriate.**

6. **Administrative Review.** Were there significant concerns about the proposal with regard to the prior performance, environmental compliance and budget administrative reviews? What were they?

**Do the total funds requested (Form I, Question 17A) equal the combined total annual costs in the budget summary? No: Funds carried forward are very different.**

**Miscellaneous comments:**

**If task #9 is to be funded and pilot programs are initiated, then CEQA/NEPA documents must be completed. It is unclear whether the applicant is asking CALFED to fund this. Under the comment section, the applicant states the second phase may need permits but no CALFED funding would go to these projects. If task #8 is to be funded, this is a multi-year project involving coordination among all regulatory agencies.**

## Delta Regional Review:

**Proposal Number:** 2

**Proposal Title:** Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

Overall Ranking:    ☒Low    ☐Medium    ☐High

Provide a brief summary explanation of the committee's ranking:

**This project would be more timely if it occurred after completion of the collaborative planning efforts now being developed in the Delta. In the interim, AFT should work directly with others that are planning in the Delta to avoid counter-productive efforts to preserve future farm use of areas planned for ecosystem restoration. Planning for east side tributary watersheds as well as legal Delta is appropriate.**

1. Is the project feasible based on local constraints?

☒Yes ☐No

How?

**planning exercise by American Farmland Trust**

2. Does the project pursue the restoration priorities applicable to the region as outlined in the PSP?

☒Yes ☐No

How?

**wildlife friendly agriculture**

3. Is the project adequately linked with other restoration activities in the region, such as ongoing implementation projects and regional planning efforts?

☐Yes ☒No

How?

**development of an agriculture plan that is isolated from other planning efforts going on in the Delta, should work directly with the ERP planning efforts**

4. Does the project adequately involve local people and institutions?

☒Yes ☐No

How?

**Delta Protection Commission, American Farmland Trust, could improve linkages to ERP Program and HCP's**

Other Comments:

## External Scientific: #1

### Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 2

Applicant Organization: American Farmland Trust

Proposal Title: Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

#### Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

☒Correct

☐Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

#### Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

**Excellent:** outstanding in all respects;

**Good:** quality but some deficiencies;

**Poor:** serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	There are too many indicators of bias on the part of the researchers. As a result, they come across as advocates, not analysts. Therefore, I would not hire them to provide information upon which important policy decisions might be made.
-Good	
XPoor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

Yes, they are generally clear. However, the tasks outlined to be undertaken do not cover the hypotheses. Also, there is a clear advocacy position in the wording, not a tone of unbiased analysis. This makes me question whether a balanced effort can be expected.

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

**No real justification is given. It just says CALFED needs the information.**

**The model is not presented.**

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

**I am not able to judge the appropriateness of the approach because the approach is not well presented.**

**The results may be of use, but I am not convinced they will be balanced nor exhaustive regarding the topic.**

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

**The approach is not fully documented. The technical content is not well described. Also, the numerous statements implying an advocacy position of the researchers makes me very skeptical about the content of the project. Little real "analysis" seems to be planned.**

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

**No**

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

**Information will be generated, but its value is debatable. Again, the problem is the lack of analysis in favor of advocacy positions on the part of the researchers.**

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

**Uncertain because they just say they'll hire consultants to do the work. I suggest that if many outside consultants are needed, that CALFED hire them and skip this "middleman" and their apparent biases.**

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

**unclear**

**Miscellaneous comments:**

## External Scientific: #2

### Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 2

Applicant Organization: American Farmland Trust

Proposal Title: Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

#### Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

none

#### Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

**Excellent:** outstanding in all respects;

**Good:** quality but some deficiencies;

**Poor:** serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	<b>Purview of proposal is beyond that of CALFED. Economic viability of Valley agriculture is largely contingent on international trade and national agricultural policy. CALFED has scant leverage on these issues. The proposal lacks a good literature review. See the comment on the budget.</b>
-Good	
XPoor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

**Vague objectives. Goal (ensuring economic viability of Valley agriculture) is beyond CALFED's purview:**

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

**No. No. Research and planning: yes.**



3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

**No. Methods are vague. No literature review. No. No.**

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

**No: Again, no review of the literature. P<30%. No.**

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

**No. No. Not appropriate.**

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

**No. Not appropriate. No.**

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

**Unclear. Unclear. Unclear.**

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

**No. Start with a literature review, then invest about \$50,000/year to get some background on the issue. The \$300,000.00 budget is excessive given the preliminary nature of this work.**

**Miscellaneous comments:**

## External Scientific: #3

### Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 2

Applicant Organization: American Farmland Trust

Proposal Title: Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

#### Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

None

#### Review:

Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:

**Excellent:** outstanding in all respects;

**Good:** quality but some deficiencies;

**Poor:** serious deficiencies.

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
XExcellent	This is an outstanding project, which will lead to many new ways to think about and develop policy and programs for delta wildlife and farming.
-Good	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

**A. The goals, hypotheses, and objectives are very clearly stated at many locations in the proposal and are internally consistent. B. This is very timely and CALFED and the bay-delta will get more out of this effort for the money than all the other proposals I have reviewed.**

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

**A. Yes, it is very much needed and will help develop a common ground for planning and policy development. B. Yes C. Yes it is justified. It is not ecological research but the research results should have great ecological results.**

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

**A. Yes - The approach is different form many other proposals in regards to scientific inquiry and ecological restoration; however, use of standardized methodology will work and lead to a hypotheses test. A weak area is the proposal asks the reviewer to read other documents to determine if the study design, data collection methods, statistical analysis techniques are adequate. Providing this detail in the proposal would have been better. B. Yes - In a big way. C. Yes - It will generate a lot of excellent information. D. Yes - It will be extremely useful to local landowners and high level policy makers.**

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

**A. yes - However, as stated in the proposal, hypotheses 1 and 2 will not be a problem, but the other hypotheses will need other agency cooperation and permits. B. Excellent C. Yes**

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

**A. Yes B. Yes - There are nine tasks which are very direct in detail. C. N/A**

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

**A. Yes - There is a large list of products which will be very useful. B. N/A C. Yes - Many. This project is all about interpretative outcomes.**

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

**A. Overall excellent B. Yes C. Yes - This is the best group to do this type of project.**

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

**A. Yes - A lot of bang for the buck.**

**Miscellaneous comments:**

## External Scientific: #4

### Research and Restoration External Scientific Review Form

Proposal Number: 2

Applicant Organization: American Farmland Trust

Proposal Title: Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

#### Conflict of Interest Statements:

I have no financial interest in this proposal.

XCorrect

-Incorrect

In the blank below please explain any connection to proposal, to applicant, co-applicant or subcontractor or to submitting institution (write "none" if no connection):

**I worked for American Farmland Trust until July 5, 2000. At that time I was appointed to my current position at the Department of Conservation.**

**American Farmland Trust has applied for, and received, grants from the Department of Conservation's California Farmland Conservancy Program. This program is under the Division of Land Resource Protection, which I head.**

#### Review:

**Please provide an overall evaluation summary rating:**

**Excellent: outstanding in all respects;**

**Good: quality but some deficiencies;**

**Poor: serious deficiencies.**

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating	Provide a brief explanation of your summary rating
-Excellent	<b>The proposal is a valuable and compelling one, but I remain uncertain about the strength of its link to the stated purposes of the PSP. However, I can see the benefit to CALFED of having a prioritization of Delta Region lands for the purposes of farmland protection and habitat enhancement activities. The proposal is also light on measurable objectives.</b>
XGood	
-Poor	

1. **Goals.** Are the goals, objectives and hypotheses clearly stated and internally consistent? Is the concept timely and important?

**The goals are mostly stated in a clear manner, but I am still a little confused about the first hypothesis (CALFED's wildlife-friendly restoration goals will be met through the improvement of the economic viability of Delta Region EMZ farmlands) -- namely, I'm not sure exactly how the tasks in this proposal will "improve economic viability" of agricultural lands. I'm also not sure how a cost of community services study (Hypothesis 2, Task 4) will**

**contribute to a healthy agricultural economy.**

**Hypotheses 3 and 4 are very good points.**

**Overall, the concept is timely and would make an important contribution.**

2. **Justification.** Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge? Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the proposal and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work? Is the selection of research, pilot or demonstration project, or a full-scale implementation project justified?

**Certainly it would be useful to have an analysis of this type for the Delta region -- AFT has previously completed "alternative growth" research projects for the Salinas Valley and Central Valley regions. That same analysis could be adapted to the micro-level in analyzing the Delta region.**

3. **Approach.** Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project? Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge? Is the project likely to generate novel information, methodology or approaches? Will the information ultimately be useful to decision-makers?

**I do believe that the results would be useful and can be applied to other regions within the CALFED service area. I'm a bit uncertain that the results will directly link to the stated purposes of the PSP.**

4. **Feasibility.** Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible? What is the likelihood of success? Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives?

**The feasibility is somewhat contingent on the actions of entities outside the control of AFT. While there is no question that AFT can achieve success with the completion of the tasks identified in the first two hypotheses, there is a question as to whether successful completion of the tasks will fulfill the hypothesis.**

5. **Project-Specific Performance Measures.** Does the project include appropriate performance measures to measure success relative to the project's goals and objectives? Is there enough detail as to how the performance measures will be quantified? For restoration projects, are monitoring plans explicit and detailed enough to determine if performance measures will be adequately assessed?

**The tasks are clearly outlined, but there seems to be little attempt to incorporate quantifiable performance measures into the proposal. Greater discussion of anticipated outcomes would be even be a useful addition in this area.**

6. **Products.** Are products of value likely from the project? Specifically for restoration projects, are products of value also likely from the monitoring component? Are interpretative outcomes likely from the project?

**Yes, the proposed products would be very useful in advancing a plan in the Delta region for the protection of farmland and in identifying areas appropriate for restoration efforts on agricultural lands.**

7. **Capabilities.** What is the track record of applicants in terms of past projects? Is the project team qualified to efficiently and effectively implement the proposed project? Do they have available the infrastructure and other aspects of support necessary to accomplish the project?

**The applicant and project team are very qualified to complete the tasks at hand. They have good experience in completing similar efforts in other parts of the state and country.**

8. **Cost/Benefit Comments.** Is the budget reasonable and adequate for the work proposed?

**Yes, it does appear to be.**

**Miscellaneous comments:**

## **Environmental Compliance:**

**Proposal Number:** 2

**Applicant Organization:** American Farmland Trust

**Proposal Title:** Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

1. Are the legal or regulatory issues that affect the proposal identified adequately in the proposal?

☒ Yes -No

If no, please explain:

**If task 9 is to be funded and pilot programs are initiated, then CEQA/NEPA documents must be completed. It is unclear whether the applicant is asking CALFED to fund this. Under the comment section, the applicant states the second phase may need permits but no CALFED funding would go to these projects.**

2. Does the project's timeline and budget reflect adequate planning to address legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal?

☒ Yes -No

If no, please explain:

**I cannot adequately answer this question.**

3. Do the legal and regulatory issues that affect the proposal significantly impair the project's feasibility?

☒ Yes -No

If yes, please explain:

**If task #8 is to be funded, this is a multi-year project involving coordination among all regulatory agencies.**

Other Comments:

**Budget:****Proposal Number:** 2**Applicant Organization:** American Farmland Trust**Proposal Title:** Delta Region Farmland Preservation and Private Lands Stewardship Program

1. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each year of requested support?

☒Yes -No

If no, please explain:

2. Does the proposal include a detailed budget for each task identified?

☒Yes -No

If no, please explain:

3. Does the proposal clearly state the type of expenses encompassed in indirect rates or overhead costs?

☒Yes -No

If no, please explain:

4. Are appropriate project management costs clearly identified?

☒Yes -No

If no, please explain:

5. Do the total funds requested (Form I, Question 17A) equal the combined total annual costs in the budget summary?

-Yes ☒No

If no, please explain (for example, are costs to be reimbursed by cost share funds included in the budget summary).

**Funds carried forward are very different.**

6. Does the budget justification adequately explain major expenses?

☒Yes -No



If no, please explain:

7. Are there other budget issues that warrant consideration?

-Yes ☒No

If yes, please explain:

Other Comments: